

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1-2: (cancelled).

3. (currently amended): An electric power steering system comprising:

an upper bracket fixed to a vehicle body in a separateable manner;

a steering column disposed between a pair of tightening plate portions of the upper bracket;

a steering shaft provided rotatably within the steering column;

a tilt mechanism comprising a tilt clamp which ~~tightly~~ fastens the steering column between the tightening plate portions of the upper bracket and a tilt pivot which oscillates the steering column;

an electric assist unit disposed at a lower end of the steering column to transmit an assist force of an electric motor to an output shaft; and

a lower bracket fixed to the vehicle body at an opposite side of the electric assist unit relative to the steering column so as to rotatably support a pivot shaft of the tilt pivot, wherein

a housing of the electric assist unit is brought into engagement with the pivot shaft of the tilt pivot in such a manner as to be allowed to move ~~loosely~~, so that the steering column is allowed to oscillate about the pivot shaft, and

a column rotation restricting portion is provided between the lower bracket and the housing,

wherein the column rotation restricting portion comprises

a primary stopper projection which is formed below the pivot shaft of the tilt pivot on the lower bracket in such a manner as to oppositely face the housing with a primary determined gap held between the housing and itself; and

a second stopper projection which is formed above the pivot shaft of the tilt pivot in such a manner as to oppositely face the housing with a secondary determined gap held between the secondary stopper projection and itself,

wherein when the upper bracket is separated from the vehicle body, the primary stopper projection is adapted to abut with the housing across the primary gap or the secondary stopper projection is adapted to abut with the housing across the secondary gap.

4-6. (cancelled).

7. (previously presented): The electric power steering system as set forth in claim 3, wherein

the housing of the electric assist unit is brought into engagement with the pivot shaft of the tilt pivot via a connecting member.

8. (cancelled).